



THE
CONNOISSEUR.

By Mr. T O W N,

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— *Versus inopes rerum, nugæque canoræ.* HOR.



THE managers of our Public Gardens, willing to make their summer diversions as complete as possible, are not content with laying out beautiful walks, and providing an excellent band of music, but are also at much expence to amuse us with the old *English* entertainment of Ballad-singing. For this end they not only retain the best voices that can be procured, but each of them also has a poet in ordinary, who is allowed a stated salary, and the run of the Gardens. The productions of these petty laureats naturally come within my notice as CRITIC; and, indeed, whether I am at *Vauxhall*, *Ranelagh*, *Marybone*, or even *Sadler's Wells*, I indulge myself in many remarks on the poetry of the place; and am as attentive to the songs as to the Cascade, the Fireworks, or Miss *Isabella Wilkinfon*.

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BALLADS

BALLADS seem peculiarly adapted to the genius of our people; and are a species of composition, in which we are superior to all other nations. Many of our old *English* Songs have in them an affecting simplicity; and it is remarkable, that our best writers have not been ashamed to cultivate this branch of poetry. *Cowley, Waller, Roscommon, Rowe, Gay, Prior*, and many others, have left behind them very elegant Ballads; but it must be confessed, to the honour of the present age, that it was reserved for our modern writers to bring this kind of poetry to perfection. Song-writing is now reduced to certain rules of art, and the Ballad-maker goes to work by a method as regular and mechanical, as a carpenter or a blacksmith.

SWIFT, in his "*Voyage to Laputa*," describes a machine to write books in all arts and sciences: I have also read of a mill to make verses; and remember to have seen a curious table, by the assistance of which the most illiterate might amuse themselves in composing hexameters and pentameters in *Latin*: Inventions wonderfully calculated for the promotion of literature. Whatever gentlemen of *Grub-street* or others are ambitious to enlist themselves as hackney sonetteers, are desired to attend to the following rules, drawn from the practice of our modern song-writers: a set of geniusses excellent in their manner, and who will probably be hereafter as much known and admired as Garden-Poets, as the celebrated *Taylor* is now famous under the denomination of Water-Poet.

I MUST beg leave positively to contradict any reports, insinuating that our Ballad-makers are in possession of such a machine, mill, or table as above-mentioned; and believe
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it to be equally false, that it is their practice to hustle certain quaint terms and phrases together in a hat, and take them out at random. It has, indeed, been asserted on some just ground, that their productions are totally void of sense and expression, that they have little rhyme and less reason, and that they are from beginning to end nothing more than nonsensical rhapsodies to a new tune. This charge I do not mean to deny: though I cannot but lament the deplorable want of taste, that mentions it as a fault. For it is this very circumstance, which I, who am professedly a CONNOISSEUR, particularly admire. It is a received maxim with all composers of music, that nothing is so melodious as nonsense. Manly sense is too harsh and stubborn to go through the numberless divisions and subdivisions of modern music, and to be trilled forth in crotchets and demiquavers. For this reason, thought is so cautiously sprinkled over a modern song; which it is the business of the singer to warble into harmony and sentiment.

OUR Ballad-makers for the most part slide into the familiar stile, and affect that easy manner of writing, which (according to *Wycherley*) is easily written. Seeing the dangerous consequence of meaning, in words adapted to music, they are very frugal of sentiment: and indeed they husband it so well, that the same thoughts are adapted to every song. The only variation requisite in twenty ballads is, that the last line of the stanza be different. In this ingenious line the wit of the whole song consists; and the author, whether *he shall die if he has not the last of the mill*, or *deserves to be reckon'd an ass*, turns over his dictionary of rhymes for words of a similar sound, and every verse jingles to the same word

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with all the agreeable variety of a set of bells eternally ringing the same peal.

THE authors of love-songs formerly wasted a great deal of poetry in illustrating their own passion and the beauty of their mistress; but our modern poets content themselves with falling in love with her name. There cannot be a greater misfortune to one of these rhymers than a mistress with a hard name; such a misfortune sends them all over the world and makes them run through all arts, sciences, and languages for correspondent terms: and after all perhaps the name is so harsh and untractable, that our poet has as much difficulty to bring it into verse, as the celebrators of the Duke of *Marlborough* were puzzled to reduce to rhyme the uncouth names of the *Dutch Towns* taken in *Queen Anne's* wars. *Valentine* in *Love for Love*, when he talks of turning poet, orders *Jeremy* to get the maids together of an evening to Crambo: no contemptible hint to our Ballad-makers, and which, if properly made use of, would be of as much service to them as *Bysshe's Art of Poetry*.

FEARING lest this method of song-writing should one day grow obsolete, in order to preserve to posterity some idea of it, I have put together the following dialogue as a specimen of the modern manner. I must, however, be ingenuous enough to confess, that I can claim no farther merit in this elegant piece than that of a compiler. It is a Canto from our most celebrated new songs; from which I have carefully culled all the sweetest flowers of poetry, and bound them up together for the delight and wonder of the world. As all the lines are taken from different songs set to different tunes, I would humbly propose that this curious
performance

performance should be sung jointly by all the best voices, in the manner of a *Dutch* concert, where every man sings his own tune: I had once some thoughts of affixing marginal references to each line, to inform the reader by-note at what place the song whence it is taken was first sung. But I shall spare myself that trouble by desiring the reader to look on the whole piece as arising from a coalition of our most eminent song-writers at *Vauxhall*, *Ranelagh*, *Marybone*, and *Sadler's Wells*: assuring him, that this short dialogue contains the pith and marrow, or rather (to borrow an expression from the *Fine Lady* in *Lethe*) the *Quintessence* and *Emptiness* of all our modern songs.

PASTORAL DIALOGUE,

BETWEEN

CORYDON and *SARAH*.

Sar. **A**H! whither so fast wou'd my *Corydon* go?
Step in, you've nothing else to do.

Cor. They say I'm in love, but I answer no, no,
So I wish I may die if I do.

Once my heart play'd a tune that went pitty pattie,
And I figh'd, but I could not tell why.

Now let what will happen, by Jove I'll be free.

Sar. O fye, Shepherd, fye, Shepherd, fye.

Cor. Tho' you bid me begone back again,
Yet, *Sally*, no matter for that.

The Women love kissing as well as the men.

Sar. Why what a pox would you be at?

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You

You told me a tale of a cock and a bull,

Upon my word he did.

Cor. I swear I meant nothing but playing the fool.

Sar. Very fine! very pretty indeed!

Cor. Come, come, my dear *Sally*, to church let us go,

No more let your answer be no.

Sar. The duce sure is in you to plague a maid so.

I cannot deny you, you know.

CHORUS by BOTH.

No courtiers can be so happy as we,

Who bill like the sparrow and dove.

I love *Sue*, and *Sue* loves me,

Sure this is mutual love

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